



News Release

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Immunization law requires parents to get info on benefits and risks of vaccine

OLYMPIA — Washington has one of the highest school immunization exemption rates in the nation. On Tuesday Governor Gregoire signed a bill requiring a parent or guardian to show that they have received information from a health care provider on the benefits and risks of immunization before opting out of school vaccination requirements.

“Childhood immunizations save lives and are one of the most effective ways to protect kids from serious, preventable illnesses,” says Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “There’s a lot of confusing information about vaccine circulating around, this law makes sure that parents will get reliable facts from one of their most trusted sources — a health care provider.”

Previous state policy made it easy for parents to exempt their child from school immunization requirements based only on convenience. Washington’s exemption rates have more than doubled over the last 10 years — during the 2009-2010 school year, 6.2 percent of children had a signed exemption. The national average for exemption rates is estimated at less than 2 percent.

Unvaccinated kids are more likely to catch and spread serious illnesses like whooping cough and measles, which can be prevented by vaccines. Making sure kids have all recommended immunizations protects them, their classmates, friends, and families from preventable diseases. Kids who aren’t fully immunized may be excluded from attending school, preschool, or child care if a disease outbreak occurs.

A health care provider does not need to sign the Certificate of Exemption form for parents or guardians who show membership in a church or religious group that does not allow a health care provider to provide medical care to a child.

Beginning July 22, 2011, parents or guardians who want to exempt their child from school or child care immunization requirements must fill out and submit the updated Certificate of Exemption form to their school or childcare.

More information and an updated Certificate of Exemption form will be available [online](#) as soon as the forms are finalized. Health care providers can use the CHILD Profile Immunization Registry to help parents with the necessary paperwork by printing it from the CHILD Profile system.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your [local health agency](#) (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) or the [WithinReach](#) (www.withinreachwa.org) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

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Visit the Washington Department of Health website at http://www.doh.wa.gov for <i>a healthy dose of information</i> .
